

Accession Nos. 2010.003 and 2011.006

Clarence DeVaughn Ellington Photograph Collection on Ravensworth Farm

Dates: 1956

Creator: Ellington, Clarence DeVaughn (1928-2017)

Extent: 2.0 linear feet

Level of description: Item

Processor & date: Chris Barbuschak, July 2018

Administration Information

Restrictions: None

Copyright: Consult repository for information

Citation: Clarence DeVaughn Ellington Photograph Collection on Ravensworth Farm, Virginia Room, Fairfax County Public Library

Provenance: 15 photographic prints donated by Clarence DeVaughn Ellington in November 2010, and negatives donated in August 2011.

Separations: None

Administrative History or Biographical Sketch

Clarence DeVaughn "Duke" Ellington was born on October 2, 1928, to Clarence T. and Ada J. Ellington in Shreveport, Louisiana. Ellington enlisted in the U.S. Army on January 24, 1946, and served overseas in the Ordnance Department. Ellington graduated from Centenary College of Louisiana in May 1953, and later attended Tulane University Law School. He married Suzanne Post of Alexandria, Virginia on September 11, 1953, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Alexandria. The couple made their home in New Orleans. In 1964, the Ellingtons moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, where "Duke" became the General Manager and Executive Vice President of the Charlotte Motor Speedway. In 1966, he developed a chain of luxury mobile home parks in the Charlotte area.

In 1955, Helen Keeney Lee (1895-1968), owner of Ravensworth Farm, tasked Ellington's father-in-law, Arthur L. Post (1906-1985), a Washington, D.C. relator, with selling the farm to commercial developers. Post was a long-time friend of Mrs. Lee and her daughter, Mary W. Lee, and having a friend sell the ancestral farm made it easier for her to emotionally let it go.

The area surrounding Ravensworth was home to an Indian village and trading post until 1685, when Col. William Fitzhugh purchased the 22,000-acre tract from the original grantee, John Matthews. He named the tract Ravensworth in honor of his family's ancestral home in Yorkshire. Fitzhugh brought in slaves and overseers to cultivate the land and also leased parcels of it to Huguenot refugees. Around 1796, William Fitzhugh's great-grandson, William Fitzhugh, built the Ravensworth mansion, which later came into the possession of the Lee family. Robert E. Lee's mother died in Ravensworth and later Lee's family sought temporary refuge there during the Civil War. Robert E. Lee's grandson, Dr. George Bolling Lee acquired sole-ownership of the 563-acre Ravensworth

property in 1922. Unfortunately, the Ravensworth mansion burned to the ground on August 1, 1926, due to an arsonist. Two of Ravensworth's chimneys survived the fire and the Lees used the chimney bricks to erect a new house on the site. Also built at an unknown date was an architecturally unique brick stable and coach house. An old stone spring-house, possibly the property's oldest structure, survived the fire.

On February 8, 1955, Helen Lee sold the farm to Washington-area investors represented by trustees D.R. Bramwell and G.M. Nevill, but she was allowed to remain living in the homestead. After the sale, the farm was initially offered to the University of Virginia as a proposed site for the northern branch of the university. Plans called for remodeling the farm buildings into classrooms, however the offer fell through. E. Carl Hengen and Bernard Steinberg purchased the 400-acre tract in 1959, and planned to develop it into a 1,000-house residential community called "Ravensworth Farm". The developers initially intended to preserve the remaining house and outbuildings, but they were demolished in the summer of 1960. By then Helen Lee had moved out of the house, and her daughter, Mary Lee, left shortly before demolition.

Before moving out of the house, Helen Lee planned a big dinner party on the farm in 1956, inviting some of the best known names in the region, including legendary Washington, D.C. lawyer Thurmond Arnold. She wanted everything to go just right, and at the last minute wanted a new carpet installed for the party. The carpet supplier could not install the carpet on such short notice, so she sought the help of her friend Art Post. Post enlisted the assistance of his son-in-law, Clarence DeVaughn Ellington, and the two personally installed the new carpet on the day of the party. Neither man had any previous experience installing carpet, but they met the demanding deadline and the party was a success.

Ellington later recalled:

"Helen Lee thanked us profusely. Then she spoke to each of us privately saying that she wanted to do something for each of us by way of additional gratitude and asked what she could do? Without taking a breath I answered immediately that I would like her permission to photograph the Farm before it was destroyed. I got an immediate 'Yes!' together with a kiss on the cheek."

The images in this collection are the result of Ellington's request. He also made a second set of prints for the Lee family. Ellington died on February 28, 2017, in Woodstock, Georgia.

Scope and Content

The Clarence DeVaughn Ellington Photograph Collection on Ravensworth Farm consists of 15 mounted photographic prints, 2 photographs, and 58 negatives taken in 1956 of the Ravensworth Farm formerly located between Annandale and Springfield, Virginia and currently the site of Ravensworth Shopping Center, Ravensworth Industrial Park, and the Ravensworth Farm subdivision. Subjects include images of buildings located on Ravensworth Farm, as well as unrelated images of the C&O Canal, George Washington Memorial Parkway, and pier remnants of the Aqueduct Bridge in Georgetown. A few negatives are unidentified.

Series

Series 1: Ravensworth Farm Mounted Prints, 1956, Box 1

This series contains 15 oversize prints of Ravensworth Farm mounted by Ellington. Negatives for these prints are found in Series 2.

Series 2: Ravensworth Farm Negatives, 1956, Box 2

This series contains 58 negatives and 2 snapshots of Ravensworth Farm photographed by Ellington. Some negatives are unidentified, and it's not clear if the negatives depicting buildings under construction or the unidentified rock formations were taken at Ravensworth. Three negatives that are unrelated to Ravensworth include: Aqueduct Bridge piers near Georgetown (which were removed in 1962); the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal; and the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Subjects:

Ellington, Clarence DeVaughn (1928-2017)

Fitzhugh family

Lee family

Ravensworth (Va.) – History

Washington (D.C.) – Bridges – Aqueduct Bridge

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Box	Folder	Description	Date
		Series 1: Ravensworth Farm Mounted Prints, 1956, Box 1	
1		Caretakers house	1956
1		Cemetery, front gate and brick wall	1956
1		Driveway to main house	1956
1		Main house, front view	1956
1		Main house, outbuilding	1956
1		Small house, west of Main House	1956
1		Springhouse	1956
1		Springhouse, looking south towards dairy barn	1956
1		Stable and coach house and barn, distant view through fence	1956
1		Stable and coach house, cows grazing in front of south elevation	1956
1		Stable and coach house, east elevation	1956
1		Stable and coach house, west and south elevation	1956
1		Stone wall and driveway	1956
1		"Summer House" gazebo	1956
1		"Summer House" gazebo, interior	1956
		Series 2: Ravensworth Farm Negatives, 1956, Box 2	
2	1	Barn, interior view looking out of doorway	1956
2	2	Barn, interior view looking out of doorway	1956
2	3	Caretakers house	1956
2	4	Caretakers house	1956
2	5	Caretakers house	1956
2	6	Cemetery, front gate and brick wall	1956
2	7	Cemetery, front gate and brick wall	1956
2	8	Driveway to main house	1956
2	9	Driveway to main house	1956
2	10	Main house, front view [photo]	1956
2	11	Main house, front view	1956
2	12	Main house, front view	1956
2	13	Main house, front view	1956
2	14	Main house, outbuilding	1956
2	15	Main house, outbuilding	1956
2	16	Main house, outbuilding	1956
2	17	Main house, outbuilding	1956
2	18	Main house, side view looking east from driveway [photo]	1956

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2	19	Main house, side view looking east from driveway	1956
2	20	Main house, side view looking west from driveway	1956
2	21	Main house, side view looking west from driveway	1956
2	22	Main house, side view looking west from driveway	1956
2	23	Small house, west of Main House	1956
2	24	Small house, west of Main House	1956
2	25	Springhouse	1956
2	26	Springhouse	1956
2	27	Springhouse, looking south towards dairy barn	1956
2	28	Springhouse, looking south towards dairy barn	1956
2	29	Stable and coach house and barn, distant view through fence	1956
2	30	Stable and coach house and barn, distant view through fence	1956
2	31	Stable and coach house and barn, distant view through fence	1956
2	32	Stable and coach house, cows grazing in front of south elevation	1956
2	33	Stable and coach house, east elevation	1956
2	34	Stable and coach house, east elevation	1956
2	35	Stable and coach house, west and south elevation	1956
2	36	Stable and coach house, west and south elevation	1956
2	37	Stable and coach house, west and south elevation	1956
2	38	Stone foundation, close-up	1956
2	39	Stone foundation, close-up	1956
2	40	Stone wall and driveway	1956
2	41	Stone wall and driveway	1956
2	42	Stone wall and driveway	1956
2	43	Stone wall and driveway	1956
2	44	"Summer House" gazebo	1956
2	45	"Summer House" gazebo	1956
2	46	"Summer House" gazebo	1956
2	47	"Summer House" gazebo, interior	1956
2	48	"Summer House" gazebo, interior	1956
2	49	"Summer House" gazebo, interior	1956
2	50	Unidentified building, close-up of dead animal	1956
2	51	Unidentified building, interior	1956
2	52	Unidentified building, interior spiral staircase	1956
2	53	Unidentified buildings under construction	1956
2	54	Unidentified buildings under construction, stacks of lumber	1956
2	55	Unidentified rock formation	1956
2	56	Unidentified rock formation	1956
2	57	Unidentified rock formation	1956
2	58	Aqueduct Bridge, Suzanne Ellington looking over Key Bridge at	1956

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		remnants of piers towards Georgetown	
2	59	Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, view looking towards Georgetown Car Barn	1956
2	60	George Washington Memorial Parkway, view from Key Bridge looking west looking toward Three Sisters	1956